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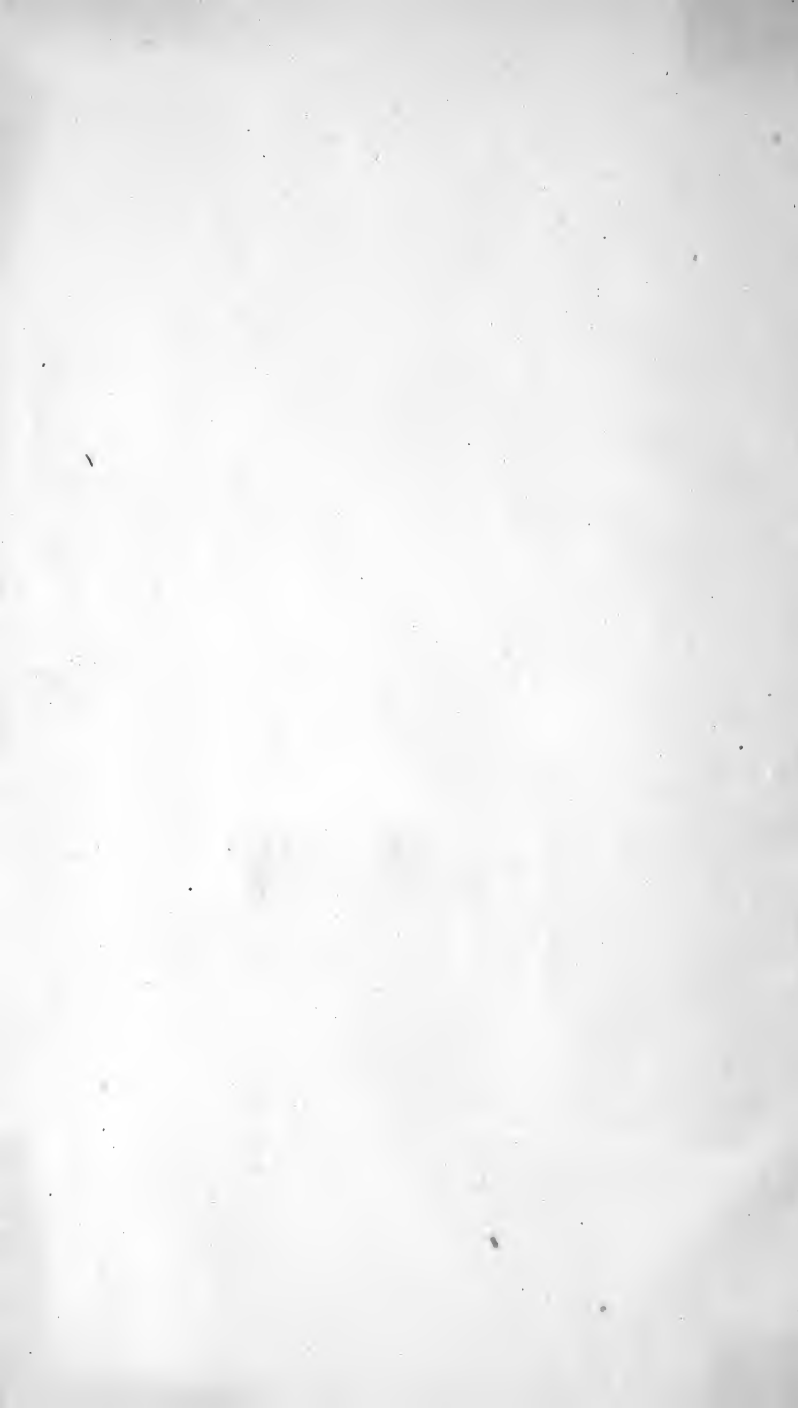
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







To Mr. Sarah Hughes.
with Dr. Meigs's respects

THE AUGUSTAN AGE.

A LECTURE

AT THE ATHENIAN INSTITUTE,

FEBRUARY, 1839,

BY CHARLES D. MEIGS, M. D.



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TO PHILIP H. NICKLIN, ESQ.

DEAR SIR :

Some time since, I was requested to deliver a Lecture for the Athenian Institute. I selected the Augustan Age as a suitable topic ; but, as, by a sort of tacit understanding, the Lectures ought not to occupy more than an hour each, I found myself unable to effect more than the presentation of a few sketches relative to the history, arts, manners, and literature of the period.

I am well aware that the following pages, which comprise the Lecture in question, are hardly worthy of being presented to a person of your literary taste and knowledge. Yet, I am unwilling to lose even this trifling opportunity of dedicating to you some offering, expressive of the gratitude and respect with which I am, and shall always be,

Your obliged and faithful servant,

CH. D. MEIGS.

Philadelphia, March 1st, 1839.



LECTURE.

The history of Rome is so closely connected with that of the whole course of civilisation, that her institutions, manners, arts, literature, and political action, must ever be classed among the most interesting topics that appertain to the province of polite letters. Twenty-six centuries have already elapsed since the foundations of the empire were laid by Romulus on the banks of the Tiber ; yet notwithstanding that we live in an age so remote, and in a country so distant, whose continent even was unknown to their people, we daily enjoy the *placidam sub libertate quietem*, the sweet repose of liberty, tempered by laws, whose principles, and almost whose very forms, are derived to us from the constitutions of the ancient Romans.

There are no temporal interests greater than those which relate to governments ; in them are included all others—our national virtue, peace, security—our social and individual rights—which all take their complexion from the system under which we live. Hence, in addition to the motives of a natural and laudable curiosity,

we have the strong incentives of personal interest to look into the history of a people to whom we owe so much, and from whom we, in a manner, draw our political and social existence.

The founding of Rome was one of the great eras in history. It was the beginning of a State which existed from a period seven hundred and fifty years before the advent of our Saviour, until its final overthrow by Mahomet II., in 1453. Its dominion became so vast, comprehending the whole civilised world, and its impression upon the political as well as intellectual condition of our race so deep—I might say so ineffaceable—that it must ever continue to be a subject attractive to the enquiring mind; nor can any part of it be esteemed unworthy of our serious contemplation and regard. Let us, therefore, devote the lecture this evening to a review of some of the points in this “*most strange, eventful history*,” in order, haply, to deduce therefrom some reflections applicable to our several duties, whether as individuals, or as members and parts of a social compact, whose value and stability depend, not upon chance, or a blind fate, but upon the intelligent and virtuous action of the parties to the contract.

I shall direct your attention to the Augustan age of Rome. By this I do not mean the reign of Octavius only; but rather, the period when the state had acquired nearly her largest dimensions; when the policy of extending her conquests was, in a measure, laid aside, and

the energies of the administration devoted to the preservation of the actual frontier, and the improvement, reform, and embellishment of the interior ; when wealth without bounds, and luxury unequaled, were the fruits of her numerous victories ; when the intellectual efforts of her orators, poets, historians, and philosophers, were most noble and successful ; and, in fine, when a mighty revolution of government led to the decline and fall of the empire, involving mankind at large in the disasters of that signal ruin.

We cannot read the Roman history without perceiving, that while moderation, a universal respect for and acquiescence in the action of the laws, a firm and intelligent patriotism, may carry a nation to the heights of glory and power ; so also luxury, vice, and immorality, a contempt of law, and indifference to legislation, will ever sap the foundations of society :—for a nation's downfall is the just punishment of her own corruption and debasement ; and liberty and law are never compatible but with virtue and intelligence.

Rome was originally governed by kings. An insult offered to a virtuous woman was followed by the expulsion of the Tarquins, and the establishment of the republic upon the true principles of a representative and responsible government. The Consulship, the Senate, the Tribunitian power, and the *Comitia*, or assemblies of the people—these were the principles which carried Rome to so lofty a height. The people loved

and understood a system which gave them a share in the government and a stake in the commonwealth. They felt that their officers were but *their* agents in the great transactions of the period; and they held them responsible for every violation of law or usage, and for every omission of duty.

In this system, the Consuls represented the supreme executive authority, which was entrusted to their hands upon the expulsion of the tyrants—a power at once purified and rendered innoxious by the annual recurrence of the elections.

The Senate was an executive council, endowed with the faculty of issuing *senatus consults*, or ordinances, which had the force of law; and of acting as a court of judicature in certain cases. This dangerous and aristocratic authority, however, was limited and restrained by the Tribunitian office, which was a barrier against its encroachments on the rights of the people. The tribunes ever sat near the doors of the curia, or senate house, to arrest or nullify, by pronouncing the word *veto*, every unlawful or inexpedient act of the senate or the consuls.

Then come the people themselves, divided into tribes, and centuries, their names carefully enrolled upon the census. When summoned to the forum, to meet in *comitia*, or committee of the whole, they determined, by their voices, at what was called the *rogation*, upon the validity of every act of their magistrates; and those

voices were the expression of the nation's irresistible will, as to every executive, legislative, or judicial act.

Having thus obtained the control of their own affairs in their earlier day, these people remained rude and unpolished, despising the luxuries, arts, and elegance of other nations. They lived on simple food and were lightly clothed, in order to harden their bodies. Their manners were grave and direct, but incorrupt. They possessed an indomitable courage, and an invincible attachment to their country, for which they bore fatigue, hunger, cold and danger, and willingly suffered even death itself. They were patterns of obedience and discipline in the armies, and gave up, beyond what was needful for sustenance, all that they had and were, for the service of the state, for which every Roman seemed to be born. They were the only really free people; and their conquests rapidly extended on every hand over their neighbouring nations.

The Romans had subjugated the whole peninsula, as well as Sicily and Sardinia. From the Greek colonies of the southern Italy they imbibed a taste for philosophy and the useful and elegant arts, before despised among them, but which had long been cultivated and flourishing in those ancient seats of learning and luxury. It was there that Pythagoras had established his celebrated school of philosophy, and filled the land with his sober and obsequious disciples, the patterns of a moral and temperate life. But there also was the land of the Sybarite, so high-bred, luxurious, and effeminate, that he passed a sleep-

less night because a folded rose-leaf happened to be left on his couch of repose. The country was fertile, highly cultivated, and adorned with numerous edifices of the most beautiful proportions, and was rich in all the productions of a highly elaborated civilisation : but the letters, arts, and riches of their provinces, while they may have softened the manners of the rude republicans from the banks of the Tiber, served rather to whet the appetite for new and more lucrative victories, than to teach the wiser and better lesson of contentment and moderation.

Next comes the struggle with Carthage. It was fierce, desperate, and seemed to be waged, not for victory, but for existence itself. The sublime displays of moral beauty and strength in which its story abounds, deserve to be treasured up as models for the imitation of all free people. It was vainly that the energy, skill, and courage of Hannibal were employed against the genius of Rome. The fatal anathema *maranatha*, the *delenda est Carthago*, so often sounded before the Romans, was fulfilled when the ploughshare and the salt razed out for ever the very foundations of that great city of Africa, foreshadowing to all other nations the sure fate of every unyielding foe of Rome.

With the conquest of Carthage was acquired all that she had gained in Spain. England was already partly overrun by the legions, whose terrible ensigns were waving over the populous countries of France and the Rhine. Northern Italy, Greece, Thessaly, the Islands, Asia Minor, and Syria, had fallen under the blows of

the invincible cohorts; and Egypt, the mother of the sciences, the oldest and most renowned seat of civilisation, with her manifold knowledge, her skill in numerous arts and manufactures, and her strange, imperishable architecture,—brought all these, with an inexhaustible agricultural wealth, as she bowed down before a people whose name and country had been unknown to her ancient kings, and who appropriated the hoarded treasures of so many centuries of civilisation.

And thus it was, that, from the Irish channel to the banks of the Euphrates, and from the African desert to the Rhine and the Danube, the nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues of so many diverse lands, had swelled the tide of the Roman triumphs, knelt in submission before the rostra of the consuls, and learned to look upon the city of the seven hills as the mistress of the nations—the arbitress of the world.

If, now, you will advert for a moment to the high grade of intellectual attainments, and the considerable advances in moral science that had given such a just pre-eminence to the Greeks and Egyptians in the preceding centuries; if you will refer to the luxurious and magnificent courts of Alexander's successors, scattered over the many countries of the East, and in Egypt, now included among the possessions of Rome, it will be easy for you to perceive, that the softness and voluptuousness of the Oriental style, blended with the elegance and finish of the Greek manners, would naturally tend towards the great

Capital, that they would become familiar there ; and that the city must therefore have been the seat of an elegance and refinement equal at least to whatever we regard as most polished, finished, and ornate in society at the present day.

It could not have been otherwise, (you will agree with me,) if the extension of the supremacy of the republic, the introduction of the arts, wealth, and learning of foreign nations, and the political power and patronage of which she became the dispenser, drew together at Rome a population so vast, and caused so great an extension of the bounds of the city, as to make us with reason incredulous of the accounts given of its magnitude.

The population of Europe was perhaps not inferior to its present census. One hundred and thirty millions obeyed the commands of the senate, while the city alone contained more inhabitants than the modern *London*. Her populousness has been variously estimated at from two to five millions of persons.

These people enjoyed the benefits of a careful and wise system of agriculture, capable of supporting a vast horde of non-producing artisans, soldiers, idlers, and domestic slaves. So happily were the measures taken for a supply, that a dearth of provisions was rarely known. The lands were tilled chiefly by slaves, to whom, says M. D'Arnay, the citizens committed every toilsome business, reserving to themselves only what was reckoned agreeable or honourable. They were so numerous as to be counted by thousands and distinguish-

ed by nations. A Roman citizen left at his death four thousand slaves, to be disposed of according to his last will and testament. Several persons in Rome owned twenty thousand slaves; while among our southern planters it is very rare, indeed, to meet with one who possesses more than two hundred.

In that age there was an active commerce even with India, and with the shores of the Baltic, with the western and southern nations of Europe, and with Africa; while all the ports of the Mediterranean were conveniently open to Italy, which jutted like a great promontory deep into the sea.

The land was every where laid open, and made accessible by admirable roads, accurately graded. Portions of the Appian, Emilian and Flaminian ways still exist in good preservation, to attest the more than modern skill and fidelity with which they were constructed. These roads commenced at the Forum Romanum, where was erected a gilded pillar, from whence they radiated to every part of the empire. They were regularly marked with milestones; and upon them, at short distances asunder, were relays of horses and carriages, for the use of the couriers, public characters, or even private persons, who could obtain permits for traveling post. To show the rate of progress in those days, I shall only say, that Julius Cæsar, in one of his journeys, reached the Rhone in six days from the metropolis, a distance of seven hundred miles, which could hardly be done in our own

times. Are not good roads among the most important results and signal evidences of a high civilisation ?

We ought not to lose sight of the influence of the armies in developing the civilisation of the people. They were composed of citizens and auxiliaries. They were conducted by officers of the highest intellectual culture ; men and youths of the most influential families. The chiefs were taken from among the *consulars*, the senators, and orators, whose names are imperishably inscribed on the historic page. They marched over all the countries of Europe, carrying every where, with them, the light of the capital, and bringing back to Rome and to Italy the most precise information as to the geographical features and statistical condition of the provinces,—their arts, commerce, religion. These generals acquired boundless wealth, which they loved to expend in beautifying the countries intrusted to their care, erecting in them temples, baths, theatres, bridges and aqueducts ; and in constructing roads. Many of the remains of these works, more or less perfect, still exist in France, Spain, and England, claiming our admiration of labours worthy of the enlightened administration of a civilised people. They also loved to exhibit at home the fruits of their warlike toil, in leading up the triumph—that very culmination of glory and pride. On these occasions, they brought out to public view, plans of cities conquered, or countries reduced ; talents of silver and gold ; precious stones and ornaments ; beautiful statues ; rich paintings ; choice books ;

and even the persons of their royal captives and inferior prisoners—a trembling train, dragged from the remotest bounds of the state, of various name and race, to grace the car of the triumphant general, add new lustre to his glory, and glut the appetite for show of that overgrown and luxurious capital.

As to Rome itself.—The dwellings of the citizens, which, in early times, were of the simplest and most humble character, and suited to the austere virtue of its brave and order-loving people, presented a strong contrast to the temples, basilicas, and other public edifices, which lent an air of dignity to the whole, not lessened, perhaps, by that very contrast. After the Gallic conflagration, the style of domestic architecture improved, and Horace complains of the decline of the ancient simplicity and rigour of manners, evinced in the ostentatious dwellings of the citizens, which seemed ambitious to equal the fanes and temples of the gods of Rome.

The streets of the city were paved, and the municipal police was excellent, so that prompt and condign punishment overtook the infractors of law or the violators of the public tranquillity. It was admirably drained by vast subterranean channels, composed of masonry of the most durable description, and which are even still there, to attest the grand designs of her public men, and to be justly ranked among the wonders of the world.

Rome was abundantly supplied with water, by means of numerous aqueducts, which brought their *rivers* into

the city, from a distance of sixty miles in some instances. Their channels were supported upon lofty arches, which bore them up on high, (Horace says, *super imbres*, above the showers,) over every obstacle of ravine or valley, through every obstruction of mountain and rock, to furnish such a perpetual profusion of the element, that not only was there the greatest abundance for domestic purposes, but the public baths were daily open for the whole population at a vile price ; than which nothing could more conduce to the public health or more effectually promote good manners. A Roman considered his bath scarcely less essential to his welfare than his supper.

As to the ornaments of the city—those things that might tend to make it agreeable to the citizens, or attractive and admirable for strangers. The theatres, circuses, and porticoes, were very numerous. These, as well as the thermæ, fora, and temples of the gods, were encrusted with the richest marbles, and some even covered with plates of gold. They were clustering with glorious columns of marble, and jasper, and sienite, and adorned with sculptured tympana, and pediments, and rich architraves and friezes. But what shall I say ! The miraculous productions of the chisel were there in endless profusion. There was the wonder-moving group of the Laocoon ;—the dying gladiator—an immortal work, where the king of terrors seems ever to stand over his victim, quenching under the cold, pale, beautiful marble, the last faint promethean glow, which yet he cannot extinguish.

There, doubtless, stood the Apollo of the Belvidere. You cannot come into the presence of that divine statue without remembering Homer's high sounding lines descriptive of the god, the

Δαυνὶ δὲ κλαγγή, γαυετ' ἀργυρέοιο βίοιο.

The clang of his bow you almost hear, and turn to catch the whistle of his shaft as it flies towards the writhing Python. The Venus de Medici was there. Shall I praise that statue? it is the peerless and priceless gem of art! Many thousands of statues in the city alone are said to have so encumbered and obstructed the public places, that legal restrictions were passed to prevent their erection and dedication except under certain conditions.* Italy was filled with them, in her cities and towns, and the villas of her wealthy citizens.† Some forty or fifty

* Quando pero richiamo alla memoria, che fatto incapace il campidoglio di piu ammetterne, anzi troppo angusto per la gran quantità che ve n'erano state poste, convenne ad Augusto trasferirle nel Campo Marzo: e sotto Claudio ingombrarono sì fattamente le strade, i fori, e ogni altri parte delle città, che fu necessario raffrenare la licenza dell'ambizione con proibire che nissun privato potesse porre in avvenire a se stesso l'onore della statua, senza permissione del senato, se pure non prendesse a far di nuova, ovvero ristorasse qualche opera publica, &c. —*Maffei*.

† “Nullum publicum opus quodcunque nomines; nullus adeo locus publicus aut vacuus, ubi non hæc ornamenta. Et credo equidem nihil magis in tota urbe admirandum elegantioribus ingeniis fuisse.”.....“Harum statuarum tanta erat frequentia, ut Claudius imperator

of these wonderful creations of an exquisite taste and a surpassing skill, have come down to our times ; and how precious they are, those of you well know, who have seen with what sort of almost religious care they are preserved in the palaces and museums of the potentates of Europe. If you will look over Visconti's *Icongraphie Romaine*, or Rossi's *Raccolta de Statue*, you will be ready to agree with me, that the mere sculpture of Rome furnishes us the strongest evidence of the refinement of an age abounding with such charming tastes, such delightful propensities. We are apt to think that our beautiful Philadelphia is the Athens of America. We have two statues here—one of William Penn, and one of Benjamin Franklin—to say the least, neither of them admirable ; but there stands in the court of the Academy the fragment, the ruins of an antique statue, which, deprived of feet, hands, and even of its head, still is powerful to fill the mind with admiration of the grace and beauty of its attitude ; its majestic proportions ; its rich, yet simple drapery ; a certain air of dignity ; and a repose which could only be imparted by the touch of a master. How beautiful must have been a city in which tens of thousands of statues of bronze, or of the marbles of Paros or Pentelicus, composed, perhaps, not a tithe of its numerous attractions.

coercere sit conatus, quia nimia jam copia urbem, vias vicos non ornabant, sed stipabant et arctabant.”—*Lipsius. Roma Illustrata*, p. 193 : Lond. 1692.

Is not a love of the fine arts esteemed among the evidences of liberal notions? and do you not prize among these evidences, a discriminating taste and judgment concerning paintings? But those people had paintings of Zeuxis, or Parrhasius, or Cydias, which they bought at prices beyond what we pay for the works of Titian or Lorraine, or the finest pencillings of Rubens or Murillo. Fifty thousand dollars was the sum that Hortensius paid for a single picture by Cydias. How many such had he? We at least know that the walls of their apartments were adorned with the most beautiful designs and compositions; of brilliant colouring, and admirable delicacy; paintings of historical subjects; centaurs, fauns, human figures, birds, animals, and flowers, which, according to Sir W. Gell, an able judge, were at least equal to the chef d'œuvres of modern artists.

As to their furniture and decorations, they are models which we are glad to imitate. Their chairs, tables, bedsteads, and *meuble* of all sorts, were of the most elaborated finish, rich in material and tasteful in form; as were their candelabra, lamps, vases, and cabinets.

The services of plate were costly beyond ours. We read of the dinner service of a Roman gentleman, which consisted of nine pieces, of silver—the centre one weighing five hundred pounds, surrounded by eight others of fifty pounds each: and their agents traversed sea and land to cater the most luxurious viands, fish, fruits, and vegetables, for entertainments exceeding in cost almost

our powers of belief. One of the Apicii, used to living well, opened his veins and died, because having eaten his whole estate, saving only a paltry seventy thousand pounds sterling, he found he could no longer support such a table as became an eminent and enlightened gastronome like himself.

The form and ceremony observed at feasts is, in some respects, a measure of politeness ;—savages eat like savages. At a Roman entertainment, the most piquant dishes were regularly announced, and ushered in with a flourish of music, as if a king were about to enter, and were received with suitable expressions of admiration and praise. I think it is not very polite to give your guests bad wine, and it is *extremely* polite to give very fine and costly sorts at your tables ; but they gave wines 200 years old, worth twenty dollars the glass ; and they drank, crowned with garlands, and soothed with the notes of flutes and hautboys, the precious vintages of Calenus, Falernus, and Chios, while fanned by slaves, reposing on couches of silk or velvet, the carpets or tessellated pavements being strewn with blossoms, and in apartments dignified with the names of the gods and the heroes !!

In all ages and countries, there is one touchstone of civilisation ;—it is an unerring rule. It is the treatment of the tender sex. But, in Rome, woman was an equal and co-ordinate creature. She received the deference and respect of the ruder sex, and participated his society, upon terms as liberal as those of modern Europe. Wit-

ness the revenge of Lucretia, Cornelia's jewels, Portia's tenderness, and the goodness of Octavia. Were not the noble qualities of those women admired as much then, and as much extolled, as they would be at the present day?—whence else their immortality in history?

The immense wealth enjoyed by private persons, as well as by eminent senators and commanders, enabled them to indulge their wives and families in the greatest luxury of dress, decoration, and enjoyments. A Roman lady of distinction was attended by numerous slaves, who had a sort of official stations about her person; as is still common for women of rank in Europe. The stola, the tunic, the jewels, the head-dresses, the cosmetics, each was committed to the care of an appointed slave; while a council of the most skilful of them sat in solemn conclave upon the adjustment of a lock or a braid, or the placing of a pin or a jewel.*

The materials of the female dress are represented to us as the very perfection of the loom: the dyes were splendid, and the combination and contrast of the colours exquisite; and the texture so fine, that the name, woven wind, "*ventus textilis*," was conferred upon some of the stuffs that were sold in the shops of Rome. Did not a satirical poet accuse the women of appearing in public dressed in a *linen cloud*? alluding to the too great tenuity of the fabric.

* Vid. Meirotto, über Sitten und Lebensart der Römer.

These ladies possessed jewels of great value. One of them is spoken of, who owned them to the amount of a million of dollars ; such as she received from her own family upon her marriage, and carried away again when she was divorced. They also had beautiful equipages of horses and carriages, and the *lectica*, a sort of sedan or palanquin, borne by slaves, painted with brilliant colours, and ornamented with gold, and even with gems. It is probable that the world never saw a more busy or splendid scene than that presented by a principal street in Rome, under a fine Italian sky, when crowded with these equipages, and thronged with foot passengers, drawn forth by the inducements of pleasure or business, into those great avenues, lined with lofty houses and temples ; grand, perhaps, as the wildest architectural visions of Martin.

Think of the places of amusement ! Let us look in upon that Naumachia. There is a great lake with several large ships riding at anchor.* The shores are surrounded by a costly pile, where thousands of spectators are come to sit down at ease, and witness all the horrors of a battle at sea. Those gallies are filled with armed men ! and they engage in action with all the rage and passion of a real fight. This is no melodrama, for the actors are gladiators, trained by the Lanistæ to the use of

* In speaking of the public shows given by Julius Cæsar, Suetonius, among others, says, that “*Navali prælio in morem cochleæ defosso lacu, biremes ac triremes, quadriremesque, Tyriæ et Ægyptiæ classes, magno pugnatorum numero confixerunt. C. J. Cæsar, cap. 29.*”

arms. The swords are *sharp*, and those quiet waters are foaming with the dash of the prow, and reddening with the blood shed for the gratification of the spectators.*

In the Coliseum, (built in a later reign), eighty thousand spectators were seated according to their respective rank, in presence of the consuls, the senate, and the equestrian order. Thither repaired the kings and princes of the earth; and the ambassadors and legates of foreign nations. Upon its dreadful arena, ferocious beasts are fighting with men scarcely armed. Hundreds of pairs of gladiators, for days in succession, renewed the game at death, with the mournful salutation, Consul! morituri te salutant!! "*O consul, the dying salute thee.*" This extraordinary people greeted with the thunder of eighty thousand voices a successful thrust, a *hoc habet*, or a skilful fence; and saved or devoted, by a turn of the thumb, the hapless Dacian, or the supple Numidian, who came to die on the sands for their inhuman pleasure. If this was civilization, it was at least not humanity! but is scarcely more execrable than the Castilian *corrida de toros*, or more brutal than the sports of the English ring!!

The public offices of religion were very imposing. The leading up of the victims crowned with flowers and wreaths; the sacrificial act; the processions, offerings,

* The circus Maximus, which could accommodate three hundred and fifty thousand persons, was sometimes used for the Naumachia.

prayers and chant of the priests ; the clouds of incense, were all fit to strike solemnly upon the imagination, if not to soften the heart. A daily host of devotees were seen crowding the adita of the lofty temples ; but there was no entering in at the sacred cell, and there was no Sabbath day in Rome—no stated repose from the cares, and vanities, and wickedness of a life—the more dissolute, sensual and devilish, by the inherent tendencies of a paganism revolting to the reason and sense of the people, who must have despised it utterly in private, while they paid it a public and legal reverence.

In fine, such was the height to which luxury and magnificence at last attained, that it is probable no modern city can be compared with Rome ; which exceeded in splendour all that we are told of the power and glory of the Caliphs, or the greatest brilliancy of the Mogul court.

The Scriptures tell us, “ Let them that stand in high places take heed lest they fall.” How can such luxury reign without its horrible counterpoise of poverty, baseness, venality, and all loathsome corruptions ? There the *few* are rich, and happy, and gay—but the *many* are very wretched ; and a dark host of them stand ever ready for insurrection, revolt, and treason. Among the people I speak of, the public morals were already ruined ; and a few wicked and daring men found it an easy thing to trample under foot a base and servile crew, who, the viler they were, by so much more were they readier instruments of public wrong.

I have no time to dwell upon the causes and transactions of the civil wars of Caius Marius and Lucius Sylla, which were the first lapses of the state. Mummius, Sylla, and Lucullus, had brought into the city the riches of the east; all their arts, their dainties, their soft and effeminate manners, were imported and naturalized: but the literature came with them. The troubles in Greece had driven out many of the philosophers and learned teachers of that country! who finding themselves liberally patronised in Rome, began to pursue there, with great success, the same modes of instruction which had rendered their native land so illustrious. Not Rome only, but Italy, was abundantly supplied with these teachers, and there is good reason to think that there was a very general diffusion of knowledge among the middling and better classes of people; and the means of acquiring education abundant and very good. I cannot here dilate upon the methods of education then in use; I can only remark, that a mode which produced such rich fruits as those we discover in the minds of certain of the citizens, could not have been without excellent principles—nor does the history of the *education* of Cicero, or the methods so eloquently detailed by Tacitus, fail to excite our regret, that some of their excellent points are not more imitated among ourselves.

Yet, alas for human nature! while the literature, and every liberal art, and pursuit, which distinguished the Augustan age, were rising to still greater heights of ex-

cellence—the inroads of luxury and the *sacra auri fames*, and the dissolution of manners, came in also as a roaring flood. And thus has it ever been with our race; we roll, like *Sisyphus*, the enormous weight of society upwards, and when we have almost attained the broad platform where it ought to repose for ever, it rushes down headlong, and leaves man ever ready, and ever obedient to the task to which fate hath bound him, to roll it up again.

But let us continue the thread of this discourse, somewhat broken perhaps in the last two or three paragraphs. We are too apt to suppose, that the compass, the press, and the steam engine, the boast of our times, by the great facilities they give us in acquiring the means of subsistence, information, and pleasure, carry us to an immeasurable distance beyond our predecessors of an ancient date.

They had a commerce, not so extensive as ours, but it answered the calls of an unequalled luxury. Their gallies sought the shores of Malabar and Ceylon, and they flew across the Mediterranean and along the coasts of the Atlantic, impelled by the sails and the oars of the *trireme* and the *quadrireme*; they had not the needle, but some of their voyages could not be exceeded in speed by the Great Western herself. They had no railways, but their beautiful roads were covered with couriers riding one hundred and twenty miles a day. They had no press, but they had thousands of scribes, who made volumes very plentiful. *Tyrannion*, one of the freedmen of *Sylla*, got together in Rome a library of

thirty thousand volumes; and Lucullus collected in his gorgeous mansion, a vast library, which he generously opened for the use of the public, as our Franklin Library is now. But I must omit much that I hoped to have time to say.

Let me call your attention to their houses. Their public buildings are described in such a manner as to make their plans familiar to us, and enable us to judge of their appearance, even did not the remains of some of them still linger on earth, resisting the shock of earthquakes, the gnawing tooth of time, and the rude assaults of barbarians. In Rome, the Pantheon remains entire, the most perfect work of that old time now on earth. The dome of the Pantheon is half of a sphere, one hundred and forty-three feet in diameter. The top of this vast vault rises to the height of one hundred and forty-three feet above its pavement; some ten or fifteen feet higher than the top of the lightning rod of the steeple in Arch street. It was erected fifteen years before the birth of Christ, and yet it stands on the spot where it was dedicated to Jupiter the Avenger, and all the gods. St. Sophia at Constantinople, St. Peter's at Rome, and St. Paul's at London, are all much inferior to this one, whose span greatly exceeds any other in the world. Remember that it has stood since before the revelation by the gospel, and is now in such preservation, as to be constantly employed as a Christian church. I should think that no person of sensibility could enter it without

a feeling of solemn awe, and a thousand gushing remembrances of the scenes that have passed within and around it. A friend, who lately made a thorough examination of it, informs me that the interior of the edifice is richly encrusted with foreign marbles of the most beautiful colours, and the sublimity of the effect produced by the single central light cannot fail to excite the admiration of every beholder.

Such buildings are not erected by an unpolished and uneducated people. But I refer you to Taylor & Cressy's *Architectural Antiquities of Rome*, and instead of describing it further, I ask, would it not be easy to imagine the scene presented by its interior when opened for the first time to the public inspection, crowded as it was with the statues of the mythological hosts, none of them, perhaps, inferior in beauty to the Roman Apollo, which, for aught we know, may have stood in one of the niches of the temple. Methinks I can look down upon its beautiful pavement, and see there a martial and diplomatic assembly that are come to gaze at and admire the fane. Yonder, perhaps, are Britons from the shores of the Humber or the slopes of Penmanmaur. There is a band of Gauls from Lutetia Parissiorum, or Lugdunum on the Rhone; hardy Germans who may have witnessed the slaughter of Varus and his legions:—that splendid cortege, jewelled and turbaned, comes from the court of Tigranes, and have brought back the eagles that Crassus lost, when he fell so far from Rome, the scene of his pride. Here are Numidians familiar with

the sandy whirlwind, the red simmoon, and the awful solitudes of Shahaara ; Abyssinians from beyond the cataracts of the Nile ; Lusitanians who have wandered on the banks of the Douro or Tagus ; and Iberians from the golden shores of the Guadalquivir. You may imagine the nations of the whole earth represented in that magnificent hall, in their various costume and arms, where the toga and the laticlave alone betoken the presence of the world's masters ;—while the plumed helm, the chlamys, the lorica, and the short two-edged sword, “ *a better, never rested on a soldier's thigh,*” indicate the munificent founder of the pile : it is Marcus Agrippa, the wisest minister and most successful warrior of the day, the friend and adviser of Augustus from his youth upwards. The whole work was built at his sole cost, in discharge of his vow at the battle of Actium. There moves Cilnius Mæcenas, the patron of letters ; of an ancient and regal line ; distinguished as much for his wisdom and humanity, as for his generous promotion of every liberal art, design, or sentiment. Plancus and Pollio are there ; and that plain, unassuming person, clad in the white robe laticlaved of the senatorial rank, with a face preeminently beautiful, is Augustus himself. Upon his arm hangs his beloved sister Octavia, the most beautiful woman in Rome, while near him walks the youthful Marcellus, the destined heir of the throne, the hope of the Nations. Yonder, in their train, are seen the gentle Maro—the jocund Horatius Flaccus, the modest Propertius, Ovid,

not yet banished from Rome ; while Musa, the faithful physician, was not absent from the imposing scene.

Many of these persons, like Agrippa, had already erected, or did afterwards construct, at their own cost, buildings of the greatest magnificence, for the public use, or adornment ; and Augustus always exercised an imperial liberality in the constant employment of the artisans and artists of his capital ; which he beautified and enriched with numerous structures worthy of such a founder. He made it his boast upon his death-bed, that he had converted the Rome which he found of brick, into a city of marble.

I need only allude to the *Domus Aurea*, or golden palace of Nero, whose front was a mile in extent, and whose splendours of architecture, sculpture, painting, decoration, and whatever constitutes the highest luxury, or profusest display of wealth, appear to have exceeded the descriptive powers of the time ; and which a wiser and severer monarch caused to be wholly demolished, as too grand and glorious a habitation for any being of a mortal mould. The palace of the Vatican, which now occupies a part of its scite, notwithstanding its Sistine chapel, its Belvidere, and all the riches of art they enclose, is probably tame in comparison with the building which Nero erected on that spot.

But not alone from their public buildings are we to deduce our opinions as to the cultivation and refinement of these people. Although their dwelling houses are

crumbled to the dust, or lie buried beneath the soil, Vitruvius has told us of their construction, both for the town and the country. As to their country life and residences, can we imagine a more charming spot than the Tusculum of Cicero? Where, in any of our clubs, soirees, or saloons, shall we find such *noctes cœnæque deorum*!!! Or read the two letters which the younger Pliny addressed to his friends, Gallus, the 17th of the second Book, and Apollinaris, the 6th of the fifth Book, for full descriptions of his two villas of Tuscum and Laurentinum. Imagine the delights and comforts that he there describes, and conceive of the owner, as he certainly was, one of the most humane, cultivated, and elegant gentlemen that ever lived in any age of the world. These villas have been fully explained and restored by Mr. Robert Castell, in his precious folio, the “Villas of the Ancients,” published in 1728. Permit me, in order to give you a more graphic account than any I could present, of the mode of life among them, to read to you some extracts of Pliny’s first letter of the third Book. One addressed to Calvisius :—

“I never spent my time more agreeably, I think, than I did lately with Sp urinna. I am so much pleased with the uninterrupted regularity of his life, that, if ever I should arrive at old age, there is no man whom I would sooner choose for my model. I look upon order in human actions, especially at that advanced period, with the same sort of pleasure as I behold the settled course of

the heavenly bodies. In youth, indeed, there is a certain irregularity and agitation by no means unbecoming; but in age, when business is unseasonable, and ambition indecent, all should be calm and uniform. This rule Spurrinna religiously observes throughout his whole conduct. Even in those transactions which one might call minute and inconsiderable, did they not occur every day, he observes a certain periodical season and method. The first part of the morning he devotes to study; at eight, he dresses and walks about three miles, in which he enjoys at once contemplation and exercise. At his return, if he has any friends with him in his house, he enters upon some polite and useful topic of conversation; if he is alone, somebody reads to him, and sometimes, too, when he is not, if it is agreeable to his company. When this is over, he reposes himself, and then again takes a book, or falls into some discourse even more entertaining and instructive. He afterwards takes the air in his chariot, either with his wife, who is a lady of uncommon merit, or with some friend—a happiness which lately was mine. How agreeable, how noble is the enjoyment of him in that hour of privacy!! You would fancy you were hearing some *worthy* of ancient times, inflaming your breast with the most heroic examples, and instructing your mind with the most exalted precepts, which yet he delivers with so modest an air that there is not the least appearance of dictation in his conversation. When he has thus taken a tour of about seven miles, he

gets out of his chariot and walks a mile more, after which he returns home, and either reposes himself, or retires to his study," &c.

Pliny goes on to tell of his excellent taste for poetry, which he composed in the lyric manner both in Greek and Latin, and of the surprising ease and spirit of gaiety which ran throughout his verses.

Spurinna's baths were ready in the winter about three o'clock, and in summer about two. We are also told of his daily exercises in the sun—his game at tennis, by which he counteracted the effects of old age—his bath—his repose after it on a couch, while a book was read to him. "You sit down to an elegant repast, which is served up in pure and antique plate. He has an equipage for his sideboard, in Corinthian metal, which is his pleasure, not his pride. At his table he is frequently entertained with comedians, that even his very amusements may be seasoned with good sense." Pliny says, that although the supper was continued until the night was somewhat advanced, yet his old friend prolonged the feast with so much affability, that it was never esteemed tedious. The venerable old man, by this mode, seems to have prolonged to the seventy-eighth year, a life in which no appearance of old age was discoverable except the wisdom.

Now, there is a plain unvarnished tale; and upon it I submit to your decision, whether, under this representation of the manners and customs of that old Roman, we

have so great a right to boast the pre-eminence of our modern elegance over that of the ancients. Who among us can boast of any thing more elegant in manner, or more reasonable and judicious in conduct, than this life of Spurinna ?

I am sure, that viewing him as labouring under all the disadvantages of the paganism by which he was surrounded, his conduct *shines* in comparison with that of many of our contemporaries.

May we not proclaim, as perhaps a shining exception among our wealthy men, the elegant hospitality, the public spirit, the modest unassuming conduct of one of our excellent citizens, who, with the princely liberality of an Herodes Atticus, has not awaited the summons of the herald of death, to translate to his own country whatever it was possible to gather together of the arts and sciences, and elegance of the East, and who seeks only to employ his well-earned riches in the improvement and advancement of his native land ?

But why go back to Vitruvius or Pliny, for an idea of the domestic manners of the Romans ? Let us open the graphic pages of Sir William Gell, or unfold the great volumes of Piranesi, or the magnificent tomes on Herculaneum, published by order of the King of Naples !—Nay, let us go in person to Pompeii (I never was there,) and let us walk in the streets ; knock at the portals, and enter the houses of a Roman city, which was buried under the ashes and scorix of Vesuvius, in the year 79,—and has

recently been uncovered, with its houses, furniture, pictures, statues, coins, utensils, and even the dead men's bones of the thousand persons who perished in that dreadful day. There is the forum where they met;—the temples where they worshiped;—the theatres in which they enjoyed the combat or the comedy; and the baths in which they daily purified their persons. Examine the house of the Dioscuri;—the residence of the tragic poet; tread on their unequaled mosaic pavements; and see their buildings, as restored by Sir William Gell, and then say whether they had not the art of living; but do not form your opinion of the metropolis, and measure that city by the Pompeian scale, as you would not take your notions of Philadelphia from an inspection of Frankford or Darby.

If any stranger comes to our city, his friend endeavours to make his visit agreeable, by showing him all the objects worthy of note that are collected here—and he drives with him along some of the favourite roads, as along Turner's lane, the Falls, or the Banks of Schuylkill. How surely will the Philadelphian, on such an occasion, point out to the stranger the beauties of those pleasing landscapes; the fertile soil; the rich agricultural product, and the country residences of our wealthy men. But let us also hear what the elder Pliny has said of his own country, in the third Book, where he calls it the foster mother and parent of all lands—chosen, in the providence of the Deity, as the centre to which all

the scattered and divided communities of the earth should turn and tend, in order that rudeness and barbarism might yield to the sway of gentle manners and wholesome laws; and the various discordant and savage languages and dialects of the world, give place to the language of Rome, which should thus become, briefly, the single and common country of all mankind. Mark with what pride he speaks of Rome itself! Note his admiration at the happy and beautiful pleasantness of Campania! What an exultant description of agricultural beauty and exuberance! A landscape of smiling loveliness—so mild a sky—so gentle a temperature—so rich a profusion of streams and springs—such a perpetual salubriousness—such vast herds of magnificent cattle—pastures filled with fleeces innumerable—such shady groves—such sunny hills—such deep, and dark, and solemn woods—such breezes from the mountains—fields waving with grain, and olive plantations fat with delicious oil. So many seas, ports, and the bosom of the land, laid open to the commerce of the world.—These are nearly the expressions of Pliny himself, and do they not suffice to show that even the rich valley of Chester, along which we whirl with the speed of a rocket, beautiful and rich as it is, and proud as we Pennsylvanians may well be of it, can hardly surpass, especially in its architectural features, the Campania Felix of the Augustan age?

Mr. Gibbon, whose long and patient researches in his-

tory gave him a title to speak as with authority, was of opinion, and I use his language, that "if a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, in which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus, in which the whole enormous extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, tempered by wisdom and justice."

Our own is the boasted age of the march of mind ! and we too readily look with contempt upon the olden time which has joined the years beyond the flood. May we safely boast of the age in which we live ? What ! are the volcanic fires of the French revolution quite put out—extinguished—dead ? Those lurid fires, which, during our youth, manhood, and maturer age, have seared and scorched almost every human work and device of policy in Christendom, are but smouldering under the ashes of the nations,—ready to shoot again their broad flames to the mid-heavens ; and the convulsion and earthquake shall shake the whole frame of society, when the trumpet call to battle shall renew the strife of principles never yet settled upon their immutable bases since the overthrow of the Roman freedom. Liberty is inseparable from the representative principle ! Mankind know that everlasting truth ; nor will the universal mind of man, that is fermenting like a yesty ocean, be long bound down by the political fetters, which, like the

chains of Xerxes, are vainly thrown into the boiling surge. The millennial sun of freedom *shall* shine not here alone, where we bask in its blessed beam—but upon the uttermost parts of the earth and the sea, where freedom's fight is not yet over! In that day, to use the lines of Virgil—

Heu ! quantum inter se bellum si lumina vitæ,
Attigerint, quantas acies, stragemque ciebunt !

The Roman people once knew what liberty is ; they were the freest and best represented people on earth—they were the wisest and happiest of men—they were generous, just, economical—as individuals, content with little—but rapacious and *insatiable* in desire for the glory and perpetuity of Rome ! Why is it, that after beholding such a vision, such a surpassing show of greatness and peace, we are constrained to look upon its fall ? a mighty fall, dragging down, and crushing, and maiming, and blinding the world ! Rome grew great, and was happy while her citizens were virtuous, orderly, sober, and of simple manners. Then the greatest good of the greatest number was the aim and end of her policy. Then the representative principle was truly understood and brought into operation. Then, in short, it was, that liberty and law, in a happy concordance, made every man safe, and left him happy under his own vine and his own fig tree.

But Mummius brought home the enervating elegancies of Achaia ; Sylla broke the spirit of his countrymen, and imported the vices and accomplishments of

Attica and the East. Lucullus, his officers and troops, introduced the wealth and effeminacy of Asia. Pompey and Crassus were inestimably rich and incredibly extravagant and luxurious; while the power and popularity of Julius Cæsar were founded on his personal merits, and the slaughter or captivity of twelve hundred thousand men in his wars. The contagion of their example overthrew all remaining respect for the rigorous manners and wholesome usages of the republican times! Vices the most frightful began to stalk in the open streets at noon-day; and a smile or a jest were the sharpest censures of a depraved public opinion, which ought to have overwhelmed and withered with its scorn, the perpetrators of horrors which could not for a moment be endured in any Christian community. Let us then not desire for our country overflowing wealth. It is corrupting in its nature, and the sacred writer tells us it *is* the root of all evil. No people are so happy as those among whom moderation and a just medium of riches diffuses among all classes a sort of equality of competence—the surest safeguard of the public morals and of the public peace.

Look back for a moment to the times of the gallant republicans—the Scipios, the Fabricius, the Fabius, and Regulus. See virtue, order, decency, respect for the laws, walking hand in hand with public prosperity; and turn again your eyes to the time when that bloody, brutal, and ignorant Marius, with the heart of a hyena, as hard as Danton's and as black as Marat's, trampled down all

forms of law, and quelled in his own bosom all the gushings of a natural humanity. Such a shedder of blood as he, was worthy of the people whom he scourged, and who tamely permitted him to die in his bed at Rome.

Judge you what was the tone of that public opinion which subjected the citizens, long, and like fattened sheep, to the dispassionate *dolce far niente* humour with which Sylla the tiger first played with, and then killed them. This was the man, who, when he had already put to death some tens of thousands of the friends of his enemy, and was fearfully entreated with the words, "Oh, Sylla! when may the slaughter cease—who may expect to be safe?"—calmly replied: "O! I scarcely indeed know, yet, whom I shall save." The usurper exercised supreme dictation for years, and, when wearied with power, contemptuously threw down his bowie knife of administration, and without a feeling of fear, walked about in the streets which had been red with the blood of his slain, and jostling the crowds whose relations and friends had been his victims. Were these Romans? What cause is there to wonder at the facility with which the triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus, and Cæsar was established? or the dictatorship of Julius. Surely the aspirations of Marcus Brutus, of Caius Cassius, and Tully, after the re-establishment of the old constitution, were vain. Their efforts were fruitless; and their eloquence in its behalf was the expiring voice of liberty; and though sweet as

the last song of the swan, it was the plaintive wail of death !

The conspiracy of Catiline ; the violence of Clodius ; the dictatorship and assassination of Cæsar ; the bloody triumvirs, Antony, Lepidus, and Octavius, were but the successive lapses of the fall ; and, to close as it were the grave of freedom, then came the altar of Perugia, that frightful scene, which struck terror and paleness into all mortal hearts, and is scarcely to be whispered on earth now : and, lastly, the battle of Actium, which, thirty-one years before the birth of our Lord, delivered over the whole empire, its people, institutions, treasures, destiny, into the hands of Octavius Cæsar, Prince of the Senate, Consul, Augustus, Perpetual Tribune of the People, and High Priest of the religion of Rome. With his person thus rendered sacred ; with two hundred and fifty thousand disciplined legionary soldiers ; with his brave Agrippa and his wise and elegant Mæcenas, he began a reign, of which it has often been said, that it ought never to have commenced, or should have had no end.

The whole field of biography, even if carefully gleaned, scarcely yields a character like that of Augustus Cæsar. In early life, addicted to the quiet pursuits and humanising pleasures of literature, he abandoned them under the incitements of ambition, or the impulses of necessity ; and having, like a young and unpractised tiger, once tasted of blood, he seemed to lap it afterwards by a natural and instinctive appetite. I should transcend my

limits were I to attempt a sketch of his enormities, committed before he attained the supreme power, and it would be unjust to withhold from one, even so long numbered among the dead, the praise of having wisely, humanely, and paternally administered the government which he usurped—if indeed one may have praise for acting well upon a basis of usurpation, where perhaps the only righteous step that can be taken, is the one that leads down from the throne. Are we not indebted to a patron of letters for the change of character which recalled Augustus to reason and humanity? He sat one day on his rostrum, judging a great number of criminals who had been brought before him; and after condemning, with the utmost indifference, this one to the Tarpeian rock, that one to beheading, and others to various cruel modes of death, which seemed to excite the astonishment of the dense crowd who were looking on at his proceedings, Mæcenas, who could not even approach his master for the press, wrote on a slip of paper, “*Surge tandem, carnifex!*” “*Have done, thou butcher!*” The paper was handed over heads to Octavius, who read it, immediately dismissed the assembly, and from that hour was a better man.

This incident, which does honour to the minister, and, perhaps, no less to the monarch, was followed by no evil consequences to Mæcenas. That cautious man perceived clearly that the surest method of retaining the enormous power which Octavius had usurped, and at the same time

of preserving his prince from dangerous reactions against his person, was, by leading him to the rigid practice of the administrative virtues, clemency and justice ; both of which had been outraged in his early career. He saw that, though the dread of military execution might, for a time, hold in subjection a vast population, yet a reign of terror must always be short lived, because it is intolerable. The Romans were flattered and soothed, therefore, by the preservation of the forms of the old republic, while all the substance of power was in the hands of the emperor. Doubtless it was to soften and tame the spirit of the prince, that Mæcenæ summoned about him that *brilliant* court—brilliant not by a throne of royal state, rich with the gold of Ormus or of Ind, but shining with intellectual light ; such a splendour as might emanate only from the master spirits of the world. Hence the elegant and warlike Plancus was placed near him ; the eloquent and gallant Pollio ; the accomplished but vicious Sallust ; the witty good-tempered Horace, and many other men of distinction ; but above them all, prince or courtier, Publius Virgilius Maro ! What are gems, barbaric pearl, and gold, compared with him ? A being so gentle, modest, learned, good ! A soul so wrapt and on fire with poetical inspiration, that he, of all men living, could alone produce the *Æneid*—the poem which is second, if indeed second, only to the verses of Homer. It has been read since the beginning of the Christian era, and still addresses itself with increasing power to the wonder, the admiration of

mankind. To read *it* alone, would repay the labour of learning its language. It is not possible to give in modern language full force to the *poetry*, the divine conceptions of the beauty of nature, and the tenderness of sentiment which are every where scattered with a lavish hand, like pearls and diamonds, through the inestimable works of Virgil. I cannot refrain from offering you the translation of a passage from Visconti, as just in its criticism, as it is beautiful in its diction ; he says :

“ However, a greater design seemed henceforth to occupy the thoughts of Virgil : he meditated the production of an epic poem, the happily chosen subject of which was connected with the Homeric Epopœia ; but he desired to celebrate in it the origin, religion, glory, and greatness of Rome, her vicissitudes, and particularly Augustus, who had first organised the monarchy. The tradition which deduced the founder of Rome and family of Cæsar from the blood of Ascanius and Æneas, pointed out the hero of his song. Those who are acquainted with the theories of poetry must have remarked that the Latin poet knew how, by a surprising skill, to put together the two poems of Homer, and producing from them a single one, to add to it, even while imitating it, new beauties of a higher order ; and that if the father of poetry is for ever above and beyond all rivalry in the abundance, sweetness, and nobleness of his diction, the grandeur of his invention, as well as by the majestic simplicity of his personages, Virgil has occupied a station

nearest to him by giving us a poem which never languishes, which is more varied and pathetic than his model; in which the rapidity of the recital does not enfeeble either the truth of his paintings or the force of his impassioned expressions. Formed by the poets of the Greek scene posterior to Homer, the sensitive soul of Virgil has seized upon the most beautiful movements of the dramatic poesy; and his genius and his taste perfected by the study of all that was most beautiful in the two languages, have enriched the *Æneid* with multitudinous reminiscences of those antique beauties which seduce the imagination of the reader, and do not even permit him to regret the sublime simplicity of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*."

I should willingly defer to many of my hearers, as more learned or feeling critics, and riper scholars than I can pretend to be; yet I might challenge all the poetry of all ages to excel some of the passages of the sixth book of the *Æneid*, which he read with his own lips to Augustus, surrounded by his family. Where, in the whole range of poetical inspiration, shall we look for a more benign and graceful spirit than that which, like a very Urania, "*walks in beauty*," in the lines:

"Principio cœlum ac terras, camposque liquentes.

Lucentemque globum lunæ," &c.

Or where shall we seek out a verse that moves with

a loftier stride, or glows with a more patriot fervour than the celebrated

“Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra,
Credo equidem : vivos ducent de marmore vultus ;
Orabunt causas melius ; cœlique meatus
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent :
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento :
Hæc tibi erunt artes ; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.”

The *Iconographie Romaine* contains, among its precious engravings, a full length miniature portrait of Virgil, copied from the illuminated page of a manuscript of the fourth century, and which is supposed by the learned archæologist to be, perhaps, a true representation of the Roman poet. I should regret to be convinced that his arguments for its genuineness and credibility are not well founded, for it is pleasing to have impressed upon the mind's eye, “the very face, the body of the man, his form and pressure,” who from schoolboy days to life's present hour, comes over the memory and the affections, like a being celestial in excellence—an instructor in virtue ; one who, in thought, word and deed, seemed designed of heaven “to raise the genius and to mend the heart.”

Could I possibly give you a better idea of the cultivation of manners in the Augustan age, or of the sensibility of the people to the power of intellect and virtue, than by reminding you, that when Virgil entered the

theatre, he blushed and was bewildered to find that the assembled thousands seated there, spontaneously and unsolicited, rose up to do him reverence? Shall I not say, too, that he was rewarded with a fortune of half a million of dollars, and spent the latter part of his life, too short, alas ! upon a beautiful estate near Naples, beloved by troops of friends, and cherished till his last hour by his munificent patron, the emperor. The tomb of Virgil, near Posillippo, is one of the shrines which the wayfarer of that region loves to approach : a shrine, decorated not with the martial trophies of victorious war, and bloody laurels, but with those green bays, which grow ever fresher and fairer with the immortal youth that Maro won by his deathless verse.

But I must return to my subject, from which I have been enticed away by the fascination of his name.

I cannot, in a short lecture, even sketch out the great transactions of that first imperial reign, nor perhaps does the design of your lectures include more than an indication of subjects worthy of your study or curiosity. Those events are delightfully detailed by many writers, and I gladly commend to the perusal of every one present the work of Mr. Blackwell—*The Court of Augustus*—which (an opprobrium of booksellers) is out of print ; but which is one of the richest productions of the British press, and is ardent in all the praise and aspiration of true liberty that beseems a true and freeborn Englishman.

Among the interesting events of Octavius's life, are

the war of Mutina, the defeat of Antony, and the flight of that remarkable man towards the western Alps, his junction with Lepidus and return to Italy, accompanied by his powerful legions and the remains of his own troops. These are stories full of interest for their incidents and their political importance.

It was by the intervention of Lepidus that the celebrated conference near Bologna took place. In the middle of the narrow river Rhenus, which flows by the walls of Bologna, there was a small island. The three chieftains, Lepidus, Antony, and Octavius, had led their several armies into view of each other, and encamped them separately on the banks of the stream. Bridges were laid to the island, reaching from the opposite shores ; and Lepidus entered first. Having examined every part of the ground, and finding no treason there, he gave the signal agreed upon, when Antony and Octavius immediately approached from the opposite banks, and met in the midst of the island. The legions, at a distance, gazed in awe-hushed silence, while these three men, having carefully scrutinised each other's persons in search of concealed daggers, sat down, Octavius in the midst, and Lepidus and Antony on either hand, and began a conference which continued for three days.

There, alone, overheard by no mortal ear, the voice of conscience silenced in their breasts ; by the most shocking concessions to each other's revenge, pride, and interest ; they divided the empire amongst themselves, and esta-

blished themselves a triumvirate to restore the republic. That is to say, they resolved, by means of the military force then under their control, to seize the public treasure, to put to death by the sword three hundred senators and two thousand knights, the best and most patriotic citizens of Rome ; and to abolish the whole system of government ; thus trampling under foot the sacred rights of their fellow citizens—those privileges and franchises which had descended to them through so many ages of order and law.

This dreadful and wicked conspiracy against their country—one of the most awfully important transactions on the whole record of human events—is most eloquently related by Appian, the Alexandrian. You may there learn how these men rushed from their detestable conference in the Rhenus, like destroying demons, to the capital ; the terror that preceded their march ; the closing of the gates guarded by their centurions ; the setting up of the lists of the proscribed in public places ; and the letting loose upon the inhabitants of a brutal soldiery. You will there see how a great dark cloud of terror brooded for days over that immense metropolis. Even the pen of Thomas Carlyle, dipped as it is in the blended hues of the bow and the storm cloud, and practised in the deliniation of revolutionary scenes, could not paint with more distinctness and force the enormities of that cruel persecution. The heads of Rome's bravest and best were brought into Rome's great forum, and cast down at the

foot of Antony's rostrum, as he sat there to keep the tale of blood, and to pay the price stipulated for the ghastly faces of his former companions and countrymen. Had the fatal mandate gone forth only against that one man—the orator, philosopher and gentleman—M. T. Cicero, it would deserve the execration of mankind; but the sword did execute its dreadful mission, and we stand aghast at scenes ever to be abhorred. The deadly glare of that scene may show to every friend of liberty how fatal a thing it is to entrust the power of the sword into hands not amenable to law; and from that dark cloud is thundered, even in our ears, the solemn warning, that every violation of law is an injury done or threatened to every citizen. We may learn from it, that a party spirit that points to this or that man as the load star of political safety, and draws us to promote his particular views as the only means of national welfare, is treason against duty, and a gross libel upon the intelligence, virtue, and capacity of man. Among free people the contest should be, not for *men*, but for *principles*. Would that among us that partisan spirit which is the bane of all free governments, might perish and disappear for ever, and that our constitution and laws, written down in every man's heart, might reign supreme over our happy country.

If the persons who truly loved the old constitution, had acted conformably to these views, we should never have read of the war of Mutina, of Sextus Pompey, of Perusia, or of Actium: they were, like the Girondins, a

numerous and intellectual band, whose theories of politics were pure, and their aims good : but it is pitiable to see how they fell away, one after another, from the honest party, of which Cicero became the head, and through weakness and dissensions, permitted the total extinction of the representative system of the empire. That sacred principle which had been firmly established in Italy, upon the transfer thither of the institutions of Solon, was quenched, cast down, and trodden under foot, a fatal mischief for so many centuries.

It cannot be denied that the reign of Augustus was henceforth brilliant and prosperous for the empire. Yet what lover of law but must condemn the men who overthrew the republic. Julius Cæsar had power to renovate the commonwealth—he could have re-established and purified the representative system, and recovered in a measure even the public morals, by means of the censorial attribute, with which he was clothed. But ambition enthralled his corrupted nature, and hushed in his soul all the wholesome and natural affections which had moved and enlarged the spirit of his ancestors. True it is, ambition paid him well with power and fame. True it is, that he is even now known as a great warrior, a wise administrator, an elegant and accurate historian, beautiful in person, eloquent in debate, and brave as his sword. Yet history has paid his true reward, in telling us, that he met, for the ruin of his country, an untimely and a bloody death.

Augustus brought the hitherto restless elements of strife into quiet subjection, and no consistent attempt was made to subvert the strong foundations of his authority. Unostentatious, shrinking from the visible exhibition of his strength, he exerted it silently but surely; and pretending, all his life long, to sigh only for repose and escape from the toils of government, he yet retained the reins with a grasp that nothing but death could loosen. Agrippa often implored him to restore the commonwealth; but no; he knew better what was good for Rome, and ended by transferring the truncheon to Tiberius. Then we have a Claudius, and there was a Nero, a Vitellius, a Domitian, and a long story of woes, attributable to the first violators of the laws, whose wickedness drew after it every subsequent enormity.

In tracing up the consequences of the overthrow of the commonwealth, we discern that, notwithstanding for one hundred and fifty years the state was more splendid, vast, and peaceful, than ever before, yet with the suppression of the free spirit really commenced the gradual declension of the empire, until the mighty fabric, rushing fast and faster down, fell at last utterly, a broken and confused ruin, overspreading the world, and crushing beneath its fragments even the mighty energies of the human mind. The *dark ages*, when man became imbruted in ignorance and superstition, Attila, the Saracens, the crusades, and the feudal system, the slow awakening of our race from the stupor and delirium of the

wreck of civilisation, the restoration of letters in Italy, and the upward spring of the capacities of mankind since the fifteenth century :—it is easy to follow the succession of causations. But I must hasten to close a theme too expansive for my lecture, but well worthy of your contemplation.

A few observations seem necessary to enable me to bring my discourse properly to its termination.

In all investigations concerning the period under review, we must be struck with the obtuseness of the moral sense of the people, and the almost total absence of the principle of honour or probity among them.

To read the orations, tracts, and correspondence of Cicero, is to be convinced that his mind was richly stored with knowledge; of an amazing scope and power of reach; of the most exquisite and elaborate cultivation and polish: so that, whether we view him as orator, statesman, philosopher, or writer, we are ready to venerate him as a paragon of men. But, alas! to see how destitute he was of probity, of honour; how wavering, truckling, and inconstant he was; we are ready to feel humbled that our human nature could admit of such a lamentable obliquity as is clearly seen in much of his life. The same is true of Pompey, of Cæsar himself; and, indeed, that whole bright galaxy of intelligences that cluster on the page of history, is obscured by the moral darkness and turpitude of the age. How shall we account for this absence of a noble principle from the most eminent

characters of the times, but by referring to the great moral code, not yet received among them? The Christian religion had not yet quickened, enlightened, and vivified the moral aptitudes of mankind.

It is true, indeed, that, in our own day and generation, many of us do live regardless of the dictates of that beneficent scheme, and violate without remorse many of its clearest and most dread sanctions. Yet notwithstanding the contumacy of some, its domain does extend far and wide over the boundaries of Christendom, and it moulds, invites, and even coerces, under the vast comprehension of its influences, the universal mind and heart of the Christian nations. Turning our eyes upon those countries where the light of Christianity has not yet shot its glad beams, we behold the nations and tribes sunken in the grossest ignorance and immorality. Their governments are despotisms and tyrannies. Their morals are those of Rome, and their mind lies darkling; the torch of science is not lighted there.

But under our moral code, that torch is blazing, and is lifted up on high. That code is a pillar of fire by night and a glorious cloud by day, which leads us on from conquering, to conquer all the obstacles that oppose our exodus from the Egyptian bondage of ignorance and sensuality, and shall guide us at last to the victory over ourselves, in the subjugation of the passions, and the universal establishment of the reign of reason, and justice, order, and law.

It was a part of the plan of this discourse to compare our own political institutions with those of the Romans, in order that I might set forth wherein this frame of government, under which we live so happy and secure, excels all others of ancient or modern date; but I have already transcended my limits, and am chargeable with having presented a topic too copious for the hour. I pray you, however, to look for my apology, if not to find my excuse, in the desire I felt to awaken your attention to the department of classical literature, which is too much neglected in our modern course of *study*, or reading. It is a magazine so rich and inexhaustible of polite learning—contains such wholesome, invigorating, and elegant repasts, fitted to promote the intellectual growth, health, and strength, and beauty, that I flattered myself the mere indication of its direction might excite in some of my hearers an appetite more natural than that fastidious one, which craves such nourishment as the Paul Cliffords, Maltravers, and Sam Wellers, with which the shelves are loaded. The intellectual hunger cries to us for *bread* or a *fish*—shall we give it a stone or a serpent?

Lastly—seeing that I speak to a mixed audience of ladies and gentlemen, I ought to say that I deem not one of the fair sex less interested than other members of society, in the political and moral considerations flowing out of a view of the subjects on which I have spoken. The interference of women in politics is always improper, if not indecent—yet I should be sorry to omit this occa-

sion for saying, that I wish every American mother might know by rote the whole story of the establishment and fall of liberty in Rome ; the vain struggles of our fellow creatures to recover their lost rights, even from the beginning of the Christian era until now ; the great truth, that we have regained them here, in the United States of America—and that they are secured in our written constitution and laws. I would they might all study, and know, and justly appreciate that great instrument,—its vast import to mankind. I would that every American mother might impart to her son its great and solemn lessons—seal them deep in his young affections,—that the love of it might be engrafted upon his very nature, habits, and family remembrances—so that she might lead him up to the great stage of action, a firm, immovable, and invincible defender of it. How can any of us for a moment forget that it is the charter of our peace—the sign and seal of our security ? When it falls, ten thousand years may roll over a cheated and degraded race, before such another policy of government shall arise upon man's longing vision—the bow in the heavens, a harbinger and a covenant that God will not be angry with man always.











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